

I N S I D E

# Local

# ‘Actuarial study needed to see impact of RIAA’

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The NMI Retirement Fund is now in the process of having an actuarial study done on the impact that the Retirement Integrity Assurance Act will have on the Fund’s financial status, according to Fund administrator Karl T. Reyes.

Reyes said the Fund has already received a quotation from

Mellon Human Resources and Investor Solutions for the conduct of the study that would give the Fund’s Board of Trustees a concrete idea of the changes that the Act will have on the government’s retirement program and the benefits it will accrue with the bill’s passage.

Reyes declined to specify how much Mellon is asking for it to conduct the study but he mentioned

during last Friday’s board meeting that the cost could range between \$7,500 and \$10,000.

This comes soon after Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed into law last Dec. 5 Public Law 13-60, which was crafted mainly to remove unfunded liabilities in the retirement program, and, in the process, enhance the financial solvency and viability of the Fund.

“We have to have the actuarial

study done because it’s called for in the law, that it [Act] has to be reviewed by professionals as to what’s the impact of this one: the savings for the Retirement Fund and for the government. Maybe, with all these changes, the government would be able to reduce its present employer contribution of 24 percent,” said Reyes yesterday.

Mellon describes itself in its website as a group of employee benefit consultants and actuaries operating in 50 offices in 15 countries around the world. It offers advise on all aspects of the provision and implementation of employee ben-

efits for staff in corporations, local government departments and non-profit institutions.

Mellon HR&IS used to be Buck Consultants and Buck Healthcare, which were fused in Oct this year to become the Human Resources and Investor Solutions sector of Mellon.

The board has not made a decision yet whether to award the contract to Mellon.

Among others, the recently enacted Act provides the merging of Class I and Class II retirement categories; penalties for the early withdrawal of Retirement

Fund contributions; and the adoption of the U.S. Social Security System’s cost of living allowance model.

Besides eliminating all unfunded liability, Gov. Juan N. Babauta had earlier said that this comprehensive measure will also relieve the government from the burden of having to allocate a substantial portion of its revenue to the Fund, and permit the government to divert the necessary resources to pay for essential services for the benefit of the general public,” Babauta said.

## Last suspect in Ling Lin robbery falls

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO  
REPORTER

Police arrested the last suspect in the Ling Lin Store robbery, following simultaneous raids on several suspected hideouts in As Lito yesterday afternoon, the Department of Public Safety said.

Found in an abandoned house in As Lito was Fernando B. Quitano, who has been the subject of a manhunt since law enforcers arrested his two other cohorts in the October 31, 2003 heist.

DPS spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. said members of the Thief Apprehension Select Coalition have been visiting several hotspots where the suspects was last seen including family members, relatives, and friends’ houses.

During a follow-up operation at 2pm yesterday, TASC team re-

ceived information of a possible hideout. The group raided an abandoned house in As Lito where they found Quitano hiding.

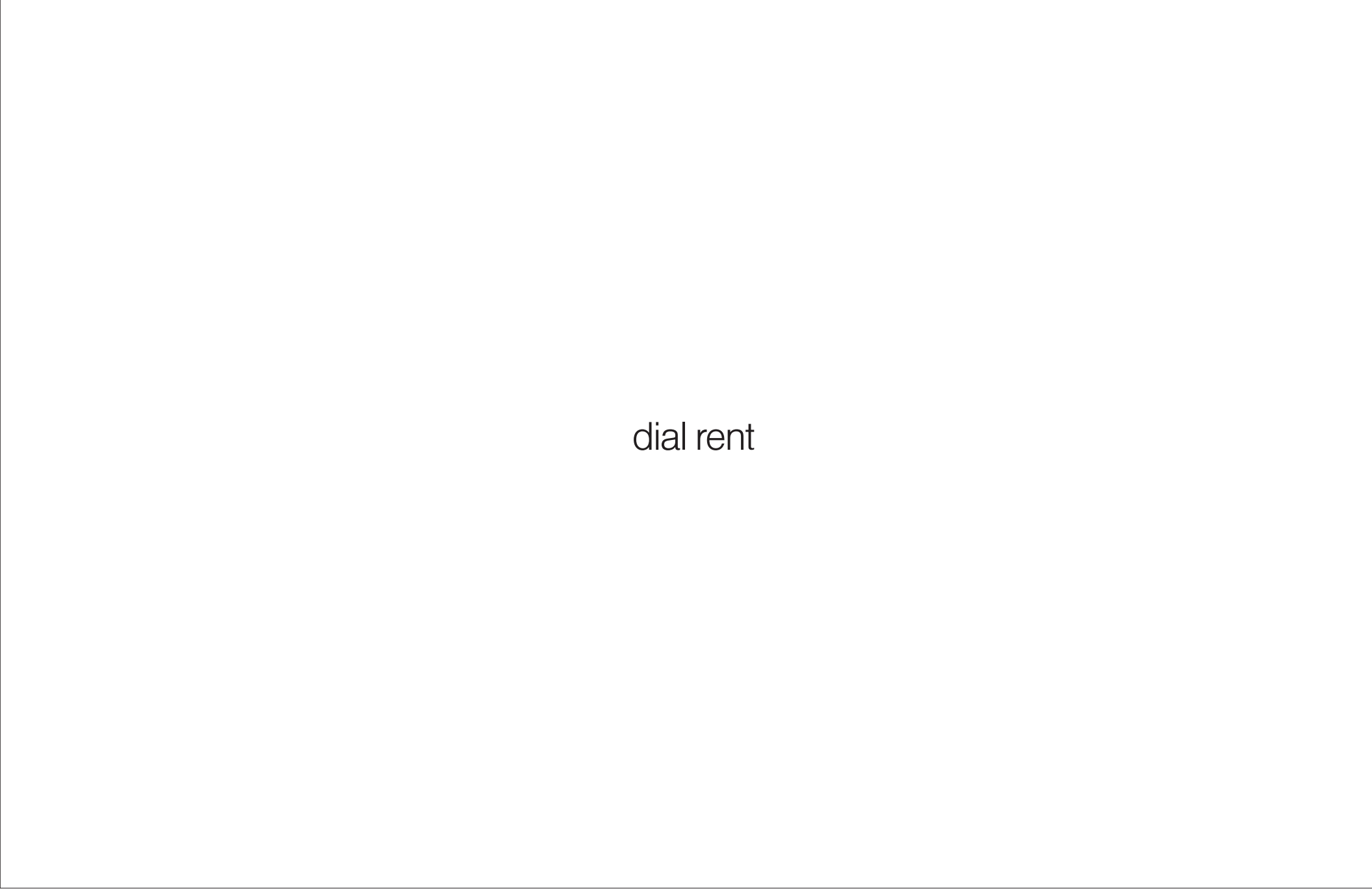
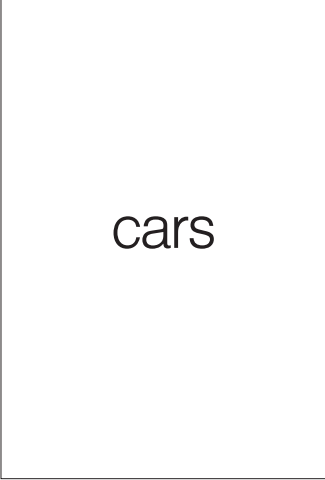
Quitano, who was the last suspect in the Ling Lin Store robbery case, was immediately placed under arrest and was brought to the Adult Correctional facility where he is currently detained.

Blas said appropriate charges were lodged against the suspect in connection with the robbery incident. Police earlier apprehended his two other cohorts—who were identified as minors.

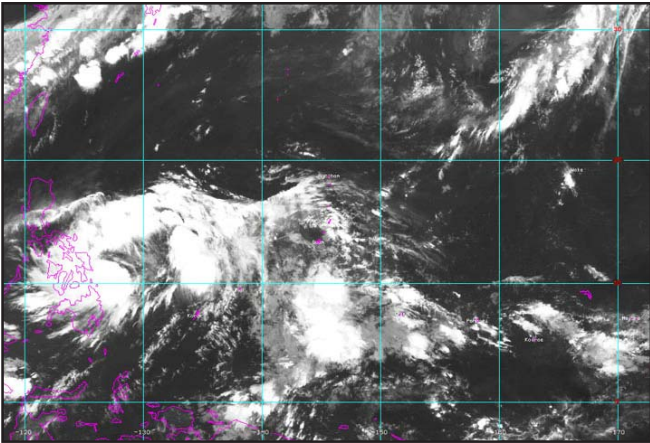
According to the reports, Quitano along with the two others suspects, entered the Ling Lin Store in Chalan Kanoa barged inside the establishment and sprayed a pepper mace onto the face of the cashier. They allegedly stole an undisclosed amount of cash and fled.

Members of the TASC team were able to track down and identify the suspects in this case. On Nov. 17, 2003, Judge Kenneth Govendo issued an arrest warrant for the three suspects.

The NMI Crime Stoppers earlier asked the community to help them locate Quitano.



WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 P.M., JUNE 17, 2003  
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Tropical Storm Soudelor is west of 130e...but scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with this system extend north to south along 31e between 12n and 18n. Additionally...isolated thunderstorms are rapidly forming along a convergence line at the system outskirts...within 90 nm of a line from 12n137e to 07n142e. A surface trough stretches from 17n147e northeastward to 25n157e. This feature has not moved much over the past 12 hours. The surface trough...combined with an upper-level trough which extends from 06n142e to 16n145e...is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms northeast of the Marianas Islands between 14n and 23n from 146e to 152e...northeast of a line from 21n137e to 11n150e. A trade wind convergence band contains scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms from Chuuk State eastward through the Marshall Islands within 100 miles of a line from 06n160e to 09n180...and between the Equator and 10n from 152e to 160e. This system is moving westward at 10 to 15 kt.

**SAIPAN AND TINIAN**  
Partly cloudy with scattered showers & isolated thunderstorms.  
**Winds:** Southeast at 10 mph.  
**Temperature:** Highs near 87. Lows near 77.

**GUAM AND ROTA**  
Partly cloudy with scattered showers & isolated thunderstorms.  
**Winds:** Southeast at 10 mph.  
**Temperature:** Highs near 87. Lows near 77.

**PALAU**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt.

**POHNPEI**  
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt.

**YAP AND ULITHI**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt.

**KOSRAE**  
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers & thunderstorms.  
**Winds:** East at 15 kt.

**CHUUK**  
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt.

**MAJURO**  
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.  
**Winds:** East at 10 kt.

	CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
	Auckland	Cloudy	59F (15C)	49F (9C)
	Beijing	Sunny	90F (33C)	72F (22C)
	Hong Kong	Cloudy	84F (29C)	79F (26C)
	Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	89F (32C)	75F (24C)
	London, England	Partly Cloudy	78F (26C)	58F (14C)
	Los Angeles	Cloudy	78F (26C)	63F (17C)
	Manila	Thunder	87F (31C)	73F (23C)
	Melbourne	Cloudy	57F (14C)	45F (7C)
	Miami	Thunder	89F (32C)	77F (25C)
	New York City	Thunder	67F (19C)	61F (16C)
	Osaka	Rain	70F (21C)	61F (16C)
	Paris	Sunny	70F (21C)	55F (13C)
	Pusan	Sunny	76F (24C)	64F (18C)
	Rome	Partly Cloudy	90F (32C)	69F (21C)
	Salem, Oregon	Cloudy	74F (23C)	48F (9C)
	San Francisco	Sunny	65F (18C)	52F (11C)
	Seoul	Sunny	84F (29C)	62F (17C)
	Tokyo, Japan	Rain	76F (24C)	68F (20C)
	Washington, DC	Thunder	80 (27C)	68F (20C)





# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

### Drug plan needs this fix

**W**hen he signs a bill today purported to help seniors afford prescription drugs, President Bush is expected to hail it as the biggest step forward for Medicare since the program's 1965 inception. In fact, it is a needlessly complex and unaffordable mess of concessions to one special interest after another. Ramrodded through Congress after only a few early-morning hours of debate, it will offer meager benefits to most seniors.

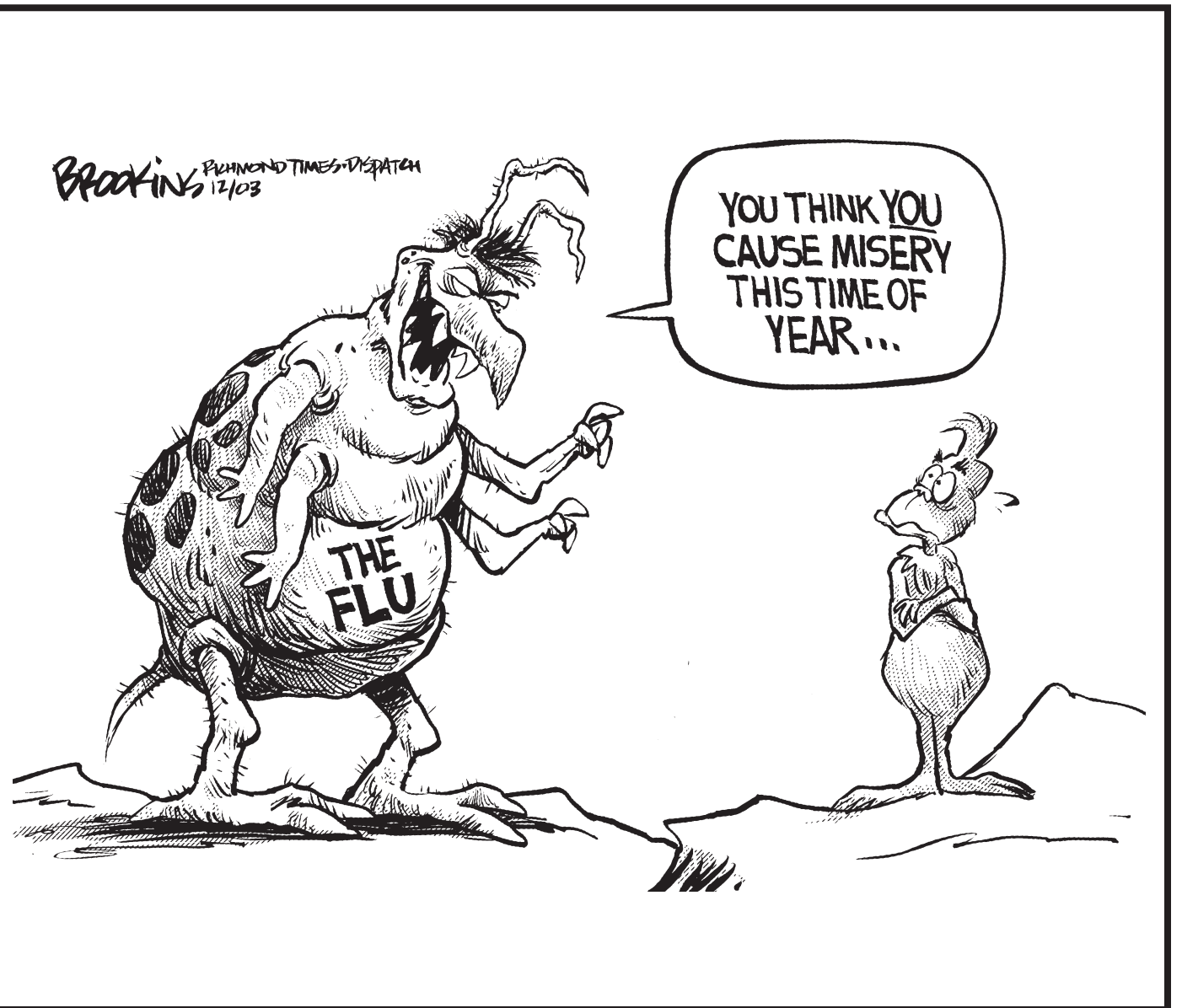
Once the bill is signed, Congress can still fix it around the edges, and House Democrats will make a good start today. They plan to introduce legislation to correct the bill's most shameful flaw: a provision, added at the drug industry's request, that prohibits Medicare from using its immense bargaining clout to reduce prescription prices.

The Bush administration officials who helped write the bill—foremost among them Medicare and Medicaid Director Tom Scully, who is now mulling over a lucrative job offer from the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America—say such bargaining would lead to price fixing. Sounds like Scully has already switched allegiances. Such negotiating over prices has been key to helping numerous government agencies—such as state Medicaid programs and the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs—keep the lid on drug costs.

The government bureaucrats negotiating such deals are not fixing prices in some antique socialist scheme. They are playing hardball in a global economy, competing against Canada and other nations that marshal their power to negotiate the best prices for their citizens.

If Bush wants to ensure that the bill is more benefit than boondoggle, he should endorse the Democratic bill. Surely he can see that if the government isn't going to help control costs, then it has no business stopping the free market from doing so.

Los Angeles Times



## Century in, century out—It's crusade time

**F**or 14 centuries, Christians and Muslims have waged a series of conquests and crusades. And while we know who started the fighting, we don't know who will end it. The one safe bet is that America's current crusade in the Middle East will not be the last.

It's worth pointing out, of course, that the Muslims "started it." In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Arabs, fired by their new Islamic faith, burst out of the Arabian Peninsula. They swept across the mostly Christian Middle East, eager to conquer and convert. Their general, Tariq ibn-Ziyad, crossed into Spain from North Africa in 711. It's from him that the Rock of Gibraltar gets its name: "Jabal Tariq" ("Mount of Tariq"). The Muslims overran Spain and then invaded France; they were defeated at Tours in 732.

Meanwhile, on another Muslim-Christian front, to the east, the Turks were on the attack. They crossed into Europe in the 14th century, holding Greece and the other Balkans for centuries.

But the Europeans had ambitions, too, both territorial and theological. In 1095, Peter the Hermit preached a Crusade—the word itself comes from the Latin for "cross"—for the liberation of Jerusalem. One can visit his statue outside Amiens Cathedral in France and see a determined-faced man waving a cross like a sword.

On the base of Peter's statue are the words, "Deus Lo Vult"—"God Wills It." As the 1914 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia records, "The Crusades were expeditions undertaken, in fulfillment of a solemn vow, to deliver the Holy Places from Mohammedan tyranny."

And there were many expeditions undertaken - eight in all, from 1096 to 1270. The Crusaders held Jerusalem for a century; the last Crusader fortress in the area fell in 1291.

So by the common reckoning, the Crusades covered a period of two centuries. And while the Crusaders were mostly animated by a blood-and-fire interpretation of Christianity, they were also interested in more mundane goals, such as land and treasure.

Indeed, over the past 14 centuries, all the Christian invasions of the Middle East have been undertaken with a mix of motives, high and low. We might think of subsequent onslaughts as simply latter-day Crusades. In 1798, Napoleon conquered Egypt; he was marching through modern-day Israel when he was summoned back to France. Maybe we could call that the Ninth Crusade. The British occupied Egypt in 1882; call that the Tenth Crusade. Then,

By JAMES P. PINKERTON

Special to Newsday

Pinkerton is a Newsday columnist.



after World War I, the British and French colonized most of the Middle East—the Eleventh Crusade.

Why this European neo-Crusading? They wanted riches and resources, of course, but they had other reasons, both idealism and what's-in-it-for-me-ism. Missionaries brought not only the gospel, but also education and medicine. Alas, the Arabs underfoot didn't appreciate these rationales, and so the Europeans were forced out, having failed in their objectives.

And now, in 2003, the Americans, the Twelfth Crusaders. The West is no longer "Christendom," but we, as first cousins to the Europeans, retain the old faith and bring new kinds of idealism, such as democracy and human rights. But the Crusader spirit is still there; it's still about bringing civilization and salvation of a backward people. As the born-again George W. Bush says, "This is about good vs. evil."

Of course, the Bush administration has made other arguments, too: that the war against Iraq was, in fact, defensive. And that's the way many regarded the earlier Crusades: as a pre-emptive war against evil. Here's the same Catholic Encyclopedia: "From the outset the Crusades were defensive wars and checked the advance of the Mohammedans who, for two centuries, concentrated their forces in a struggle against the Christian settlements in Syria."

Syria. That country was ancient when the upstart Muslims conquered Damascus in 636. It's seen more wars than almost any place, and yet many believe that peace in the Middle East depends on political decisions made by the Syrians—or imposed on the Syrians. So I need to make my own trek to Damascus, armed with nothing more than a little knowledge about its history, and a lot of curiosity about its future. Because I have the feeling that, back in America, the Thirteenth Crusade is being planned.



# US caught between two governments glaring across a One-China Policy

By HARVEY FELDMAN

China's premier, Wen Jiabao, comes to Washington this week with a tough item atop his agenda: to tell the United States to rein in Taiwan's democracy and keep the island republic from replacing its constitution, which proclaims Taiwan as the legal government of all China—or risk war in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan is a multiparty democracy with a popularly elected president. Its people go to the polls in March to reelect their leader or select a new head of state. This is something the people of China don't get to do. But that's not what upsets Beijing. China's current saber rattling arises because the major political parties on Taiwan are discussing constitutional changes.

When Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after losing to Mao Tse-tung's communist armies—but still claiming to be China's rightful ruler—he brought along the constitution he had pushed through in Nanking in 1947. So the Legislature he set up on Taiwan had seats for all the mainland constituencies, filled by those elected in 1948. If an elected official died, the runner-up or the runner-up's runner-up took over. As late as 1990 you could still meet some oldster in Taiwan who introduced himself as the member from Shanghai or Chungking, because no new elections could be held until the mainland was recaptured.

That farce ended in the early 1990s after Chiang and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, died. Martial law was gone, the secret police was disbanded and political prisoners released. Slowly but surely, those who had retreated with the Chiangs lost influence over the Taiwanese, whose ancestors had settled the island before the American Revolution.

The reformed Legislature now represents only constituencies in Taiwan. Direct, popular election of the president began in 1996, something new in all the millenniums of ethnic Chinese political practice. But all of this comes about under a constitution that still proclaims the Republic of China—Taiwan—as the sole legal government of all of China.

You would think dropping that claim would please Beijing. But you would be wrong because a constitution written for a Taiwan that lays no claim to rule all of China, that admitted it does not control Canton or Shanghai, would be a constitution for ... Taiwan. A constitution for a Taiwan that might even say the island republic is an independent nation and not a part of the People's Republic of China.

Never mind that this happens to be fact or that the PRC has never controlled Taiwan. Wen and the PRC hold to an often-repeated formula: There is only one China in the world. Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. And China's only legal government is the people's government in Beijing. Beijing calls this "the sacred One China Principle."

So what's the U.S. role in all this? Because President Carter switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing to gain an ally against the Soviet Union, successive administrations have said the U.S. follows a "one-China policy."

But our "policy" is not at all like Beijing's "principle." Washington's "one-China policy" says we have diplomatic relations only with Beijing, though we maintain all other relations with Taipei, and we "acknowledge" China's claim to the island, but we make no statement about Taiwan's status. There is one stipulation: We insist that any change in that status must be accomplished peacefully, and with the consent of Taiwan's people. In fact, we have a law that says these things: the Taiwan Relations Act, passed by the House and Senate in 1979.

So now we have China's premier, in office only a few months and with the old guard peering over his shoulder, coming to demand that the U.S. warn the Taiwanese they're playing with fire if they proceed to dump the 1947 constitution. Otherwise, Wen will say, if war comes to the Taiwan Strait, it will be America's responsibility. That Washington last week pressured Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian to back away from a referendum on independence apparently wasn't good enough.

In reply, President Bush should quote to Wen the words of the Taiwan Relations Act: The United States will "consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States." He might replay his April 2000 statement about doing whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself if attacked.

But in any case, the president should add: "It really is time, even past time, for your government to sit down and talk directly to the government on Taiwan—without preconditions, without threats. And without expecting the United States to carry your water for you."

*Harvey Feldman is a retired ambassador who was one of the authors of the Taiwan Relations Act. He is now senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation's Asia Studies Center.*

## Free pass for free trade

For the past several years Morocco has advanced as much as any Arab country toward political liberalization. It has released some human rights prisoners, held a couple of fairly open elections, created more rights for women inside and outside of government. But as in other would-be reformist states around the region, the underlying system hasn't changed. Power is still monopolized by a king, Mohammed VI; its Parliament is more a debating society than a legislative body. Islamic groups are banned or strictly controlled, prisoners are still abused and even secular, liberal-minded journalists are liable to be thrown in jail if they dare to criticize His Majesty.

Morocco, in short, is one of the countries where democratic progress seems most possible—but it's also one of those "moderate" Arab autocracies where for decades the United States has ignored domestic repression in exchange for help on foreign policy and security matters. Since Sept. 11, 2001, Morocco has been more helpful than most, even after suffering its own devastating bomb attack in Casablanca last May. Yet President Bush has announced, three times, the abandonment of that old Middle East real politik in favor of a policy of promoting freedom—which raises the interesting question of what that should mean for this North African country.

Here's what the administration has told King Mohammed it means: Economic aid is to be quadrupled next year, while military aid will be doubled. What's more, a free trade agreement between the United States and Morocco—only the second one with an Arab state—will be finished soon; negotiators were meeting over the weekend in the hope of wrapping it up. All this will be offered with no political strings attached: no requirement that the king take another step or two toward democracy, or even that he let Ali Mrabet, the last journalist who tweaked him, out of jail.

"We have strongly supported the steps Morocco has taken to move into the future," Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said in Marrakesh last week after meeting with Mohammed. "We want to be partners in this effort, and our support for Morocco as it fights terrorism and undertakes reform has increased dramatically."

The revealing part of this policy is not the favored treatment; it's the free ride. Morocco, after all, has always been an American favorite. But in other parts of the world, the United States has not hesitated to use economic leverage to promote political change. To this day, Russia's access to U.S. markets depends on its respect for certain human rights. Arab democracy advocates in the Middle East, such as Egypt's Saad Eddin Ibrahim, argue that U.S. aid and trade preferences ought to be explicitly linked to political road maps—not instant democracy, but steps toward greater freedom, tailored to bolster the indigenous civil society or reform movements of each country.

Morocco, they argue, would be a particularly good place to establish such links. The king, who is 40 years old and took power just four years ago, claims he favors multiparty democracy, a free press and re-

## Bloomberg merits more support from blacks

When New York voters were polled recently on whether they approved of the way Mayor Michael Bloomberg is doing his job, only 37 percent of them said yes. Among black voters, he fared even worse—a measly 29 percent. This prompted a city official close to the mayor to lament that, while Bloomberg has taken on quite a few issues that black people care about, "he still gets his - kicked."

Talk to black politicians and community leaders who interact with Bloomberg on a regular basis and, according to a newspaper article that appeared last week, they give him high marks for being open and interested in the needs of the city's black residents. But talk to some regular black folks, and the mayor seems to be in trouble. They describe him as aloof and disconnected, someone who doesn't seek out their opinions before he acts—in short, a rich white guy whose most generous gestures come off as patronizing.

"I talk with a lot of people," says Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields, who says blacks feel there's a "disconnect" with the mayor. She pointed to his decision to close a Harlem firehouse and to alter the community's after-school programs as moves that upset Harlemites deeply. People care about these things, she said, "no matter that the mayor brings in Bill Gates to donate millions of dollars" for schools.

"He seems to be running the city like it's his company, with zero regard for people's ideas about what he should do," said Robb Davis, a freelance writer from Brooklyn, who is black. "You can't do that if you're mayor of a city as diverse as this one."

Consider Bloomberg's record. Crime continues to be at record-low levels, including in some black neighborhoods where it used to be the highest. The mayor has announced a program to create 65,000 new units of housing. He's initiated the most sweeping school reform in 30 years and taken drastic measures to balance the city's budget, while trying to maintain basic city services. Harlem, the city's signature black neighborhood, is booming. So what explains Bloomberg's problem with blacks?

First, he's white and Republican, and blacks tend to view the Republican Party as hostile to many of their concerns. Bloomberg is also rich, which suggests to some that he couldn't possibly relate to poorer people of color. His lifestyle—eschewing Gracie Mansion for the comparative luxury of his East Side town house and using his private jet for business and pleasure—makes him seem out of touch with the average



By JACKSON DIEHL

spect for human rights. So to make aid and free trade contingent on progress toward those goals would only be to take him at his word.

To this, administration officials protest that U.S. free trade agreements don't contain such provisions, that they weren't included in the 2001 trade deal with Jordan, that to demand them from Morocco would merely undermine the deal. But Morocco signed just such a deal seven years ago, with the European Union. One article of its "association accord" commits it to progress toward democracy and respect for human rights, and it gives European governments the right to raise these issues—though the EU, being the EU, never has.

Robert B. Zoellick, the U.S. trade negotiator, makes another argument: Free trade invariably helps build the foundations of a free society through requirements for open rule-making, through the growth of a middle class. So why make the progress you hope for a juridical requirement? "Democracy and openness is our goal," he told me. "If democracy is seen as blocking access to trade, I worry that what you will plant is not the seeds of democracy but the seeds of resentment." Zoellick has big plans for the Middle East: He sees Morocco, Jordan and Bahrain—a Persian Gulf state next in line for a free trade deal—as anchors for free trade across the region. It's a great idea. But what's to stop existing Arab regimes from using the resulting economic boost to refresh their hold on political power?

Okay, some other administration officials then say, here's the real deal. The United States isn't popular in the Middle East these days. But King Mohammed has been a true friend. He's done everything we've asked in the war on terrorism; his intelligence service has been a gold mine. He's refused to break with us on Iraq. And so now we're going to reward him by telling him to give up his throne for democracy? We can't—and the free trade deal is the one positive we've got going for us in that country.

It's not a bad argument. Maybe that's the right conclusion for now. But it raises the question about that old Middle East policy, the one President Bush has renounced three times. When Morocco's friendly king seals his strings-free trade agreement, will the Arabs—will Ali Mrabet—get the message that America is committed to their freedom or to their rulers?



By SHERYL MCCARTHY

Newsday

McCarthy is a Newsday columnist.

black New Yorker. Even his acts of generosity, such as offering to pay the funeral expenses for a man who recently died on a train, come off as patronizing to some black folks. Certainly paying millions to finance a ballot initiative makes people feel he thinks he can buy anything he wants.

I like Bloomberg. I especially like the fact that he's not your typical politician, who stages every word and deed for the political mileage he can get out of it. I like the fact that he's low key and not aggressive, and that he approaches problems coolly and deliberately. I like the fact that he says what he thinks, rather than playing to the emotions of the time and the crowd. New Yorkers—and black New Yorkers are no exception—like mayors who are dramatic in venting the feelings of the people. They prefer a mayor who responds to crises by announcing an immediate investigation, proposing a new law, railing at the perpetrators or blasting the federal and state officials who didn't keep their promises.

Bloomberg isn't dramatic. But his efforts to date belie the charge that he's detached, doesn't interact with blacks, and that he's above it all. He doesn't hold town meetings, but this is a mayor who rides the subway to the outer boroughs, meets with community groups, attends local functions, and takes his senior aides along to listen and respond. Shutting a firehouse and altering an after-school program is hard on a community, but a mayor has to make lots of hard choices. And, while Bloomberg was criticized for laying off hundreds of school aides, many of them black, it certainly beat laying off teachers.

Mike Bloomberg is no Bill Clinton, but fortunately he's no Rudy Giuliani, either. He could probably stand to work on his personal style. But, even if black New Yorkers don't want to have him to dinner, they would be wrong to write him off.

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KAMBARA

Life & Style

Sources: Nation of Islam backing Jackson

By LINDA DEUTSCH  
AP SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Nation of Islam is lending its support to Michael Jackson and has begun handling some security for the pop star as he prepares to defend himself on child molestation charges, sources told The Associated Press.

When defense lawyer Mark Geragos held a news conference on Jackson's behalf after charges were announced on Dec. 18, one of those standing behind him was Leonard F. Muhammad, identified on the Nation of Islam's Web site as its chief of staff. The group also handled security for a Dec. 20 party at Jackson's Neverland estate, sources close to the Jackson camp said.

The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Chicago-based group's involvement may extend into Jackson's financial affairs. But the group, after receiving inquiries from the AP and other news organizations, issued a statement Monday strongly denying that it has taken over any of Jackson's business affairs or that it was taking a central role in his defense strategy.

"The Nation of Islam, in response to several inquiries, has said today that it has no official business or professional relationship with Mr. Michael Jackson," said a statement issued by The Final Call, the group's newspaper. "The Nation of Islam joins thousands of other people in wishing him well."

Geragos also denied any major role for the group in aiding Jackson.

"They are not part of his defense," he said. "I'm certainly not pushing away support from anyone, but I don't ask people what their religious affiliation is when they offer support."

"A lot of people have reached out to Michael. Jesse Jackson has called, and I've spoken to him. Tons of people are supportive."

Geragos also downplayed Muhammad's presence at the Dec. 18 news conference, describing him only as "one of Michael's supporters."

Sources who have been close to the Jackson camp said Nation of Islam members handled security during the Dec. 20 Neverland party. The sources, who are familiar with the entertainer's financial affairs, also said the group began taking over some of Jackson's business affairs, and Muhammad and other Nation of Islam members had been working out of Geragos' office. Geragos denied that claim.

As the Nation of Islam inserted itself, many of Jackson's regular advisers were unable to gain access to the singer, the sources said.

In a separate development Monday, longtime Jackson spokesman Stuart Backerman said he resigned because of what he called "strategic differences." He refused to comment on the reports that the Nation of Islam had become involved with the Jackson camp.

Geragos said Backerman was fired five days ago because he spoke to the news media during the Jackson family get-together Dec. 20 at Neverland, the entertainer's estate near Santa Barbara.

The event was designed to show support for the embattled singer after he was charged with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts on a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent, reportedly wine.

"He was terminated by me personally for talking when I told him not to," Geragos said.

Backerman responded: "That's untrue. I was the spokesman up until I just resigned. I was not fired."

Backerman, who has been Jackson's spokesman for a year and was a consultant for six months before that, acknowledged that Geragos asked him after the party to not speak to the media again until they had further discussions.

Attorney Brian Oxman, who is a close friend of the Jackson family and has represented some of them in litigation, said his attorney-client relationship with the family restricted what he could say.



Michael Jackson is interviewed by Ed Bradley with the CBS television program "60 Minutes" in Los Angeles Thursday, Dec. 25, 2003. AP

Court tosses suit vs Barbie lampooner

By DAVID KRAVETS  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)**—A federal appeals court dismissed a copyright lawsuit Mattel Inc. brought against a Utah artist who shot a photographic series depicting Barbie dolls naked in a blender, wrapped in a tortilla and sizzling on a wok.

Mattel sued Tom Forsythe, a self-described "artsurdist" from Kanab, Utah, who used the fashion dolls in a work entitled "Food Chain Barbie" to criticize "America's culture of consumption and conformism." One photo, "Malted Barbie," featured a nude Barbie on a vintage Hamilton Beach malt machine.

The toy maker sued Forsythe in 1999, alleging copyright infringement and dilution of copyright. Mattel said

the pictures, which often showed Barbie posed in sexually provocative positions, could confuse consumers into believing the company was behind the works.

A federal judge in Los Angeles also had dismissed the suit. Mattel took the case to the San Francisco-based 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which on Monday agreed with U.S. District Judge Ronald S.W. Lew.

The appeals court said the lawsuit "may have been groundless and unreasonable." In addition, the court said Forsythe had a First Amendment right to lampoon Barbie.

"Mattel cannot use trademark laws to censor all parodies or satires which use its name," Judge Harry Pregerson wrote for the three-judge panel.

El Segundo, Calif.-based Mattel did not return calls seeking comment.

Forsythe has said he uses Barbie to criticize "the materialistic and gender-oppressive values" he believes the dolls embody. On Monday, he said that with the help of the attorneys who worked for free on his case, "I wasn't scared off. It was a ridiculous lawsuit."

One of Forsythe's photos, "Barbie Enchiladas," shows four Barbie dolls inside a lit oven, wrapped in tortillas and covered with salsa in a casserole dish. The appeals court said Forsythe earned \$3,659 selling postcards of his "Food Chain Barbie" series.

Forsythe isn't the only one Mattel has sued over Barbie. In January, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right of Danish pop band Aqua to distribute the suggestive 1997 pop song, "Barbie Girl," in which a baby-doll voice proclaims: "I'm a blonde bimbo girl."

mell  
+red/blue



# Q & A

## with Anthony Minghella and Jude Law

Minghella



By LORENZA MUNOZ  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

**HOLLYWOOD**—Jude Law and Anthony Minghella have had a secret love affair going—one of deep, almost spiritual friendship. After “The Talented Mr. Ripley,” the Englishmen pledged to work together more often. But it took years for Minghella to bring “Cold Mountain” to the point of casting it.

The award-winning novel by Charles Frazier, set in the unforgiving mountains of North Carolina during the Civil War, came to Minghella as a course of fate. He was searching for a story about pilgrimage. His friend Michael Ondaatje (author of “The English Patient”) recommended “Cold Mountain” in 1998 and, separately, a few months later, he received a package with the book from friend and “English Patient”

man’s inner journey. The international cast filmed mainly in Romania, which stood in for a barren, war-torn South. With the film behind them, they agreed to talk about their relationship, the notion of time, war and, this being Hollywood, stardom.

**Q: It was your idea to cast Jude as Inman after working together on “Ripley”?**

**Minghella:** No. There was nobody left. (They laugh.) If you allow me what sounds like hubris but is actually not hubris, I hope, I was very intrigued by Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni’s relationship. That Fellini found as a writer and filmmaker somebody that he felt was obviously was some idealized version of himself....

**Law:** It’s a courting process and a very odd one.

**Minghella:** If I didn’t know Jude and I wanted to interview him for a movie ... it’s business. If this is somebody that you love and is your friend and you have worked with, it is almost impossible. We couldn’t have met and discussed Inman and “Cold Mountain” and then said, “Well, that was very interesting. I will go off and cast somebody else.” And Jude could not have met me and said, “Well, that was very interesting, but I don’t want to do it.”

**Law:** Nor put you in a position where I said, “Come on, you are making this film, I’ve read it and I want to be in it.”

**Minghella:** Casting for me is a painful process ... it is very painstaking and lengthy. I always feel that terrible weight of not wanting another actor to be in some kind of arena of judgment. ... On an extremely banal level, for a film of this scale, there should have been a movie star in this part.

**Q: He is not a movie star?**

**Minghella:** There should have been an American movie star.

**Q: At one point, Tom Cruise was supposed to star?**

**Minghella:** There are ghosts of many actors around the edges of this project ... I had more calls about this part than I’ve ever had on any project I’ve been involved with. Jude didn’t fly to this movie and didn’t fall into that category by election. ... There was not a history of playing a leading man’s role. Not only was there a delicacy of the fact that we are friends but the delicacy that this was a sell to the studio—and a big sell. ... The fact that I offered three parts

on the same day was very significant. It meant that I could demonstrate to the studio that they were getting a very strong package

**Q: Jude, why did the role appeal to you?**

**Law:** Initially it was really just the opportunity to work with Anthony again. We have this joke that we sort of avoid each other and that is often more to do with our shyness—although I think we have gotten a lot better at admitting to each other how much we love working with each other now and enjoy each other’s company. ... From the point of view of an actor, I felt this was something I had never done. I had to discover new muscles in myself and the craft, but it was something I could do.

**Q: It is an epic story and yet Inman is not an epic hero. He is an everyman.**

**Law:** The challenge, and it proved to be so, was for Anthony and I to maintain this spiritual journey, (to capture) the soul of Inman. Finding a soul that would permeate a film is actually quite daunting. **Q:** Inman’s journey back to Cold Mountain really is an inner journey, to find his soul. It’s not to find Ada (Nicole Kidman’s character).

**Law:** But are they not one and the same in a way? It had been so long and the memories become so fragmented and mythical ... that in a way she symbolizes simply life and the heart which is the thing he has to find out of the mire of the war and what he has done.

**Minghella:** She is home, home is her. ... It is all one and the same thing. He is hanging on to a name of a place that isn’t even a real name. He is heading to a woman who may not even recognize him and he doesn’t even know her. It’s all about having a reason and a destination.

**Q: While this is a universal story, as you said, it is a very Southern story. How did you capture that spirit?**

**Law:** I would love to say that I studied the South and the lifestyle of the South of that period, but I didn’t. I always felt that my responsibility was really to find the heart of this man. ... The feeling behind living that kind of a life, living a hard life, is important, but the detail of what it means to be a man from a certain place isn’t necessary. It’s more where does his heart lie and what kind of a spirit is he? He is an everyman and so to put him in a specific place or even

time was perhaps the wrong journey.

**Minghella:** I think the other real clue both for Jude and for me was Charles Frazier himself. I remember Jude listening very carefully to the tapes of Charles reading the novel. Charles is a man with enormous reserve. ... There is a great deal of Inman in him. He is a man who is very, very circumspect with language. Extremely shy but a man of the mountains whose father was a teacher. Oddly enough, I found his voice as important in adapting the screenplay as I did the novel.

**Law:** He is talking at times in the novel about incredible brutality and violence, and when you hear him speaking it comes from this beautiful, soft, lilting voice.

**Q: The film really illustrates how one really just has one moment in life that you better appreciate when it comes.**

**Minghella:** That’s so true. I wrote the line where Monroe says to Ada, “I lost your mother after 22 months of marriage, and that was enough to fill a life.” In a sense, that was a flag for the film.

**Law:** It’s funny, last night—I’ve seen the film a couple of times now—one thread that came out more than ever was time. The relevance of time, and how long is time and how do you measure time?

**Q: On to the more mundane questions. So now you are a leading man.**

**Law:** I am still waiting for my membership card.

**Q: How will you be looking at your roles and making those decisions?**

**Law:** I hope to think I am going to deal with it exactly the same way I have always dealt with it. Which is that you look at the group you are going to step into, the director and part and the only obligation I’ve made to myself is to keep myself excited and interested. ...

**Minghella:** The challenge in the performance was to, in a sense, strip an actor of the things he might normally use to convey a performance which is language. Jude was joking the other day, saying he had spent a lot of time working on the accent and he had nothing to say. That is the hardest kind of movie performance, where you are having to admit people into your thoughts and feelings without the vehicle of language.



Law

co-producer Paul Zaentz. After adapting the novel, Minghella began the delicate dance, or as Law likes to call it, “the courtship,” of casting.

Understanding that on a \$90-million movie he had to strike a balance between commerce and art, he cast Nicole Kidman, Renee Zellweger and Law in one fell swoop. Minghella did not view the story as a particularly Southern tale but rather as a universal story about a



## Online bargain hunter pays premium for painful scam

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN



*Dear Abby*

10 days to return the computer and get my money back if I wasn't completely satisfied. Otherwise, after 10 days, he would collect his money from escrow.

He was selling from Spain, but only once did I question him about possible problems. What an expert he was at saying the things I wanted to hear about his online accolades and e-mail references. I even apologized for implying that he might be capable of wrongdoing.

Well, my money is gone. The escrow and good reviews were fake. The issue is "being investigated."

Recovery will be difficult or impossible because the \$1,000 was wired from my bank by me. This scammer was an expert, and I trusted him.

SADDER BUT WISER

**DEAR WISER:** This may seem pessimistic, but if it seems too good to be true, it probably IS too good to be true. I'm printing your warning so others will not be so easily taken advantage of. Caveat emptor—let the buyer beware.

**DEAR ABBY:** I recently moved to America from Germany because of a four-year, long-distance relationship with my now live-in boyfriend, "Warren."

Things were great when we lived apart. We'd spend months together when I had time off from the university.

Now that I live in his homeland, he spends most of his money gambling on the horses. It has reached the point that he can't afford to pay rent because of his gambling.

I am looking for work. He is gone all night at the races or betting online. It is starting to ruin our relationship. I realize now I came here for a stranger. I have threatened to go back to Germany if he does not change. I told Warren it was the horses or me. Was I wrong to issue an ultimatum?

ME OR THE HORSES

**DEAR ME OR THE HORSES:** You were right to draw the line. The "rush" some people get from gambling is the same as the rush addicts get from drugs—and it can be just as addictive. If Warren is unwilling to get help for his gambling addiction, your wisest move would be to cut your losses, tell him auf Wiedersehen and return home.

**DEAR ABBY:** I am a 25-year-old professional who works at an upscale retail company. I am very soft-spoken.

When people talk to me on the phone, they often address me as "sweetie" or "honey." It is incredibly demeaning.

How can I politely get co-workers and clients to treat me like an adult and not call me little-girl names?

FED UP WITH SOUNDING YOUNG

**DEAR FED UP:** Rather than trying to correct them, consider consulting a speech therapist. Lowering the register of your telephone voice and speaking in a more authoritative tone should solve your problem.

**CONFIDENTIAL TO MY READERS:** A word to the wise. If you plan to toast the New Year tonight, please appoint a designated driver. And on this night especially, designated drivers should remember to drive defensively. To one and all—a happy, healthy New Year.

*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*

*What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS, and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)*

## Ellen's popularity soars with talk show



Ellen DeGeneres speaks to reporters July 25, 2001 in Pasadena, Calif.

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Ellen DeGeneres actually thought her career was over.

She became a hero to gays in 1997, following the most highly publicized coming-out in modern history. But she soon lost her ABC sitcom, "Ellen," and her girlfriend, actress Anne Heche. A second sitcom, "The Ellen Show" came and went in 2001.

But since the September premiere of her syndicated talk show, "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," the 45-year-old has become a hot commodity and the show's ratings continue to climb. Her guests have included Tom Cruise, Gwyneth Paltrow and Diane Keaton.

DeGeneres also provided the voice for the chatty fish Dory in the animated "Finding Nemo," the highest-grossing film of the year.

"Now it seems like everything is so flattering and positive. I'm savoring this," she told The New York Times for Sunday's editions.

"It's interesting, you try to plan every step when you have a career," she said. But, she added, "There is no controlling it. To think that we're ever controlling anything is just ridiculous."

## 'Bachelor' and former fiancée friends

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Even though Andrew Firestone and Jen Scheff from "The Bachelor" have called off their engagement, they can't seem to stay away from each other.

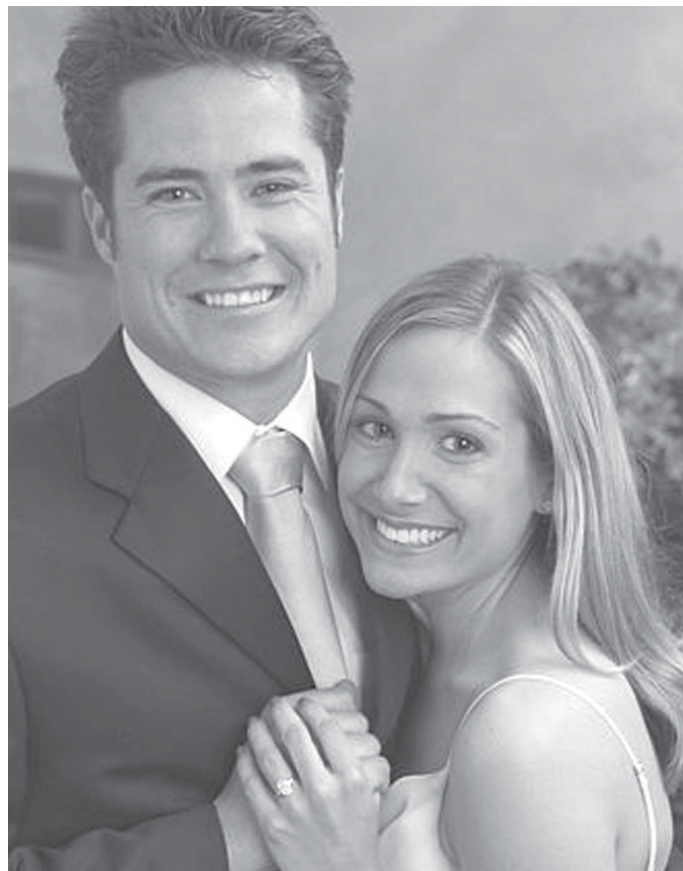
"The truth of the matter is, we are still very good friends," Firestone told In Touch Weekly magazine for its Dec. 29 issue. "I just spoke to her this morning. We speak every day."

The 28-year-old heir to the Firestone tire and wine fortune and Scheff, a petite, 27-year-old blonde, announced earlier this month that they'd broken up after having found love on the ABC dating series that aired in May. Scheff has moved out of Firestone's San Francisco apartment and returned to Chicago.

The reason?

"There wasn't one thing. There was no huge blow-up, no other person involved," he said. "This wasn't a quick decision, but something that just built up."

So far, the only couple from the reality series to make it work has been Trista Rehn and Ryan Sutter from "The Bachelorette," whose extravaganza wedding was televised Dec. 10.



Andrew Firestone poses with Jen Scheff whom he selected from 25 competitors on the ABC television show "The Bachelor" in this undated promotional photo, in Los Angeles.

## Townshend considered suicide after arrest

**LONDON (AP)**—Rock guitarist Pete Townshend considered suicide after he was arrested on suspicion of possessing child pornography, a newspaper quoted him as saying.

"If I had had a gun, I would have shot myself," The Observer Sunday newspaper quoted The Who co-founder as saying. "And if I had shot myself, it would have been ...

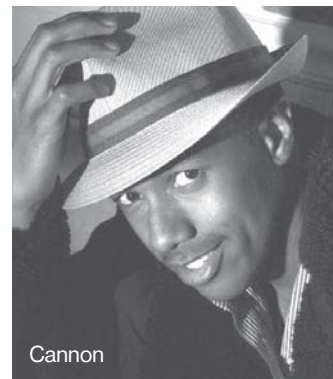
awful because it would have confirmed what everybody thought."

He reportedly said that low point came after his arrest in January as part of Operation Ore, an FBI-led crackdown on Internet child pornography.

Townshend was cleared in May of possessing pornographic images of children but still was placed on a national register of

sex offenders. That registration was part of a formal police caution he received for accessing a Web site containing images of child abuse.

London's Metropolitan Police said after a four-month investigation that Townshend "was not in possession of any downloaded child abuse images" but had accessed a site containing such images in 1999.



## Cannon's career keeping him busy

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)**—Nick Cannon is so busy these days he sometimes has a hard time keeping his roles straight.

The 23-year-old star of "Love Don't Cost a Thing" has his own Nickelodeon show, has just released a self-titled album featuring the single "Gigolo," and has a role in the upcoming "Garfield" movie based on the comic strip cat. He also is executive producer of the action-adventure film, "Underclassman."

"Last time I was on Nickelodeon I was performing live, and usually when I perform I take my shirt and throw my clothes out into the audience," Cannon told the San Francisco Chronicle on Sunday.

"I guess I kind of forgot I was doing a show for kids, and the fire marshal jumped onstage in the middle of the show and told me I couldn't be throwing stuff in the audience because they might get hurt."

Cannon said he plays the voice of Louis the Mouse in the "Garfield" movie.

"My character actually likes macadamia nut cookies," Cannon said. "I had to vibe off of those."

## Matlin gives birth to girl

**LOS ANGELES (AP)**—It's another girl for actress Marlee Matlin.

The baby was born Friday in Los Angeles and weighed 8 pounds, 3 ounces. Matlin and her husband, Kevin Grandalski, have named her Isabelle Jane Grandalski, publicist Jessica Cohen said Monday.

"She has two tiny dimples and lots of black hair," said Cohen, adding that mother and baby are in good health.

The couple also have a 7-year-old daughter and two sons, ages 3 and 1.

Matlin, 38, won a lead actress Oscar for 1986's "Children of a Lesser God." She's appeared on the TV shows "The West Wing," "Seinfeld," "ER" and "Picket Fences."

She produced the recent Disney Channel film "Eddie's Million Dollar Cook-Off," and is set to reprise her role as political consultant Joey Lucas on NBC's "The West Wing" in January.



Pastimes

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

PLEASE STAY CALM! Solution: 7 letters

S	E	N	T	I	M	E	N	T	P	U	R	S	I	D
E	S	D	R	L	O	X	S	P	B	B	A	B	Y	W
P	L	E	A	H	V	K	A	A	F	R	P	A	A	O
A	S	B	L	A	E	L	L	E	V	E	N	N	R	
T	T	R	U	D	P	A	U	S	E	P	O	D	G	C
I	S	U	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	R	P	S	R	T
E	H	T	M	C	R	U	S	T	I	L	L	A	Y	O
N	D	S	E	U	O	T	O	E	P	T	E	S	P	U
T	S	I	U	I	L	N	H	S	E	B	O	D	Y	R
R	T	D	C	H	U	T	F	N	E	R	E	I	S	N
O	O	N	L	A	O	Q	O	L	K	S	U	K	E	R
M	P	U	E	O	L	U	S	P	I	R	I	T	I	F
A	L	R	U	S	L	G	P	L	O	O	C	F	O	A
L	T	L	A	H	I	D	N	I	M	O	T	I	V	N
C	F	U	R	Y	E	S	P	A	S	S	I	O	N	S

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12/31

Angry, Appear, Baby, Balance, Balm, Bands, Body, Clamor, Conflict, Control, Cool, Crowd, Disrupt, Enough, Even, Fans, Feel, Fury, Halt, Heart, Hush, Keep, Kids, Lull, Mind, Move, Nature, Noise, Order, Passion, Patient, Pause, People, Placid, Pray, Quiet, Relax, Rest, Riot, Sentiment, Silent, Soften, Soothe, Soundless, Spirit, Still, Stop, Talk, Tour, Trouble, Tumult, Undisturbed, Upset.

Yesterday's Answer: Relaxation

NOTE: Postage and handling charges have changed for The Collected Wonderword. Add \$3 for the first book ordered, \$1 more for each additional book. Volumes 17 and 18 are \$5.95 each, payable to Universal Press Syndicate. Send to WONDERWORD, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free, 1-800-255-6734, ext. 6013.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Dobbin's dinner

4 Actor Estrada

8 Cause of trouble in River City

12 Previous

13 Speck

14 Enticement

15 Meadow

16 Mixed bag, on "Jeopardy!"

18 Anorak

20 Hostel

21 "— have to do"

24 Heron's cousin

28 Temple of the gods

32 Modern money

33 Pub order

34 Palm starches

36 Pinch

37 Rather's realm

39 Thick soups

41 Regalia

43 Approach

44 Lingerie buy

46 Irritable

50 Marceau's specialty

55 Geologic time

56 Racetrack

57 Maleficence

58 Apiece

59 Just say no

60 Hot

61 Pin number

4 Sharers of feelings, in sci-fi

5 Aussie hopper

6 Gomez's hairy kin

7 Gen-darme's topper

8 Dive

9 "— Town"

10 Bruins legend

11 Maui memento

17 Single

19 Tool set

22 Bound

23 Access the Internet

25 Ladder component

26 Buffalo water

27 A-number-1

28 Throe

29 Sheltered

30 Salamander

31 Memorandum

35 Grand

38 Without blatancy

40 Exist

42 Expert

45 Iowa city

47 Calendar abbr.

48 Charlie Brown's kite-eater

49 Old salt's tale

50 Spacecraft compartment

51 "Hail, Caesar!"

52 A Bobbsey twin

53 "— Got a Secret"

54 Cake maker's shortcut

DOWN

1 Beatles movie

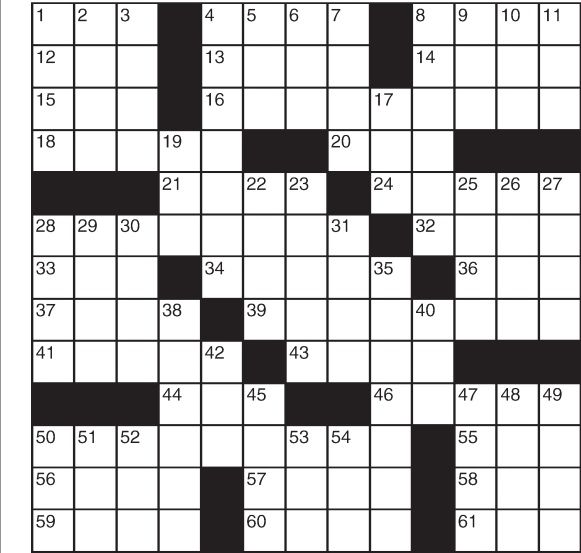
2 Neck of the woods

3 88 days on Mercury

Solution time: 21 mins.

H	A	R	K		P	A	G	E		C	A	P
I	D	E	A		I	B	I	S		O	B	I
C	O	M	P	E	T	E	N	T		M	E	T
				L	E	A	D		E	M	P	T
F	O	C	A	L		H	E	A	L			
I	K	O	N		P	L	U	M	B	I	N	G
S	A	M		S	E	A	R	S		A	I	R
T	Y	P	E	C	A	S	T		I	N	C	A
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A	G	E		C	O	M	P	A	N	I	O	N
R	U	N		E	X	I	T		G	O	N	E
P	E	T		S	O	S	O		S	U	E	T

Yesterday's answer 12-31



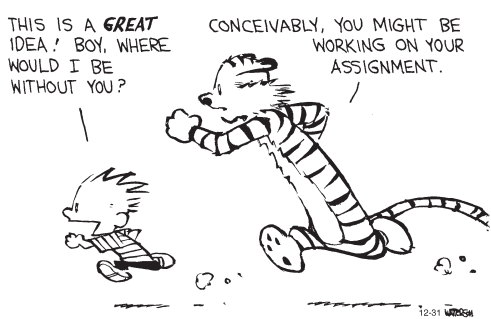
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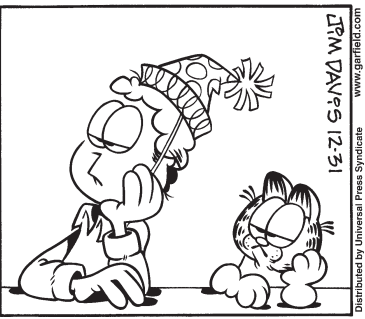
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Watterson



Garfield®

by Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Brian Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy







# Glenn Robinson scores 22 in 76ers victory



**PHILADELPHIA** (AP)— Glenn Robinson scored a season-high 22 points, and Eric Snow added 14 points and 14 assists to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 95-73 victory Monday night over the Orlando Magic.

Robinson bounced back from a 2-for-10, 4-point game a day earlier against Boston.

Kyle Korver had 16 points for the 76ers, who blew the game open with a 22-3 run in the fourth quarter. Aaron McKie had 14 points for Philadelphia, 9-of-20 from beyond the arc. Korver was 4-for-10 and McKie 3-for-5.

Iverson missed his fifth straight game with a swollen right knee, Derrick Coleman did not play with a left knee sprain, and Kenny Thomas left during the second quarter with flu-like symptoms.

## Jazz 92, Bulls 80

In Chicago, Andrei Kirilenko had 26 points and a career-high 16 rebounds to lead Utah to its 11th victory in the last 12 meetings with Chicago.

Matt Harpring also had a double-double, finishing with 15 points and 14 rebounds for the Jazz, who wrapped up a six-game road trip with a .500

record. They won despite turning the ball over 26 times.

The Bulls sure made it interesting, though. Trailing by 20 early in the third quarter, they went on a furious rally and cut Utah's lead to 79-72 on a fast break dunk by Corie Blount with 3:46 to play. But they couldn't get any closer, and were forced to foul the Jazz down the stretch.

Chicago, which has lost three straight, and seven of its last nine, was led by Kendall Gill with 13 points. He was one of six Bulls in double figures.

## Nuggets 106, Grizzlies 99

In Denver, Voshon Lenard scored 24 points, Andre Miller had 21 points and 10 assists, and Denver won for the 17th time — matching its total for all of last season.

The Nuggets opened the fourth quarter with a 14-4 run for a 95-84 lead. Memphis cut the deficit to four points with 1:25 left but got no closer.

Nene added 16 points and Carmelo Anthony 15 for Denver, which shot 51 percent compared to Memphis' 47 percent. Pau Gasol led the Grizzlies with 24 points and 14 rebounds, and James Posey added 20 points.



Orlando Magic's Tracy McGrady, right, blocks a shot by Philadelphia 76ers' Glenn Robinson during the first half Monday, Dec. 22, 2003, in Philadelphia. AP

## NBA STANDINGS

### EASTERN CONFERENCE

#### Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	14	14	.500	-
Philadelphia	14	14	.500	-
New Jersey	13	13	.500	-
Miami	10	17	.370	3 1/2
New York	10	18	.357	4
Washington	8	17	.320	4 1/2
Orlando	7	22	.241	7 1/2

#### Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	20	8	.714	-
New Orleans	18	10	.643	2
Detroit	16	11	.593	3 1/2
Toronto	14	13	.519	5 1/2
Milwaukee	13	14	.481	6 1/2
Cleveland	8	19	.296	11 1/2
Chicago	7	19	.269	12
Atlanta	7	22	.241	13 1/2

### WESTERN CONFERENCE

#### Midwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	19	10	.655	-
Minnesota	17	9	.654	1/2
Denver	17	11	.607	1 1/2
Dallas	15	11	.577	2 1/2
Houston	15	11	.577	2 1/2
Memphis	15	12	.556	3
Utah	15	13	.536	3 1/2

#### Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	20	5	.800	-
Sacramento	19	6	.760	1
Golden State	12	13	.480	8
Portland	12	13	.480	8
Seattle	12	13	.480	8
L.A. Clippers	11	12	.478	8
Phoenix	10	18	.357	11 1/2

By Associated Press

## UConn., Kentucky, Duke stay as top three

By **JIM O'CONNELL**  
AP BASKETBALL WRITER



For a change, there was no change at the top of The Associated Press men's college basketball poll.

After four straight weeks of new No. 1s, Connecticut held on to the top spot Monday after winning its only game last week by 50 points over Iona.

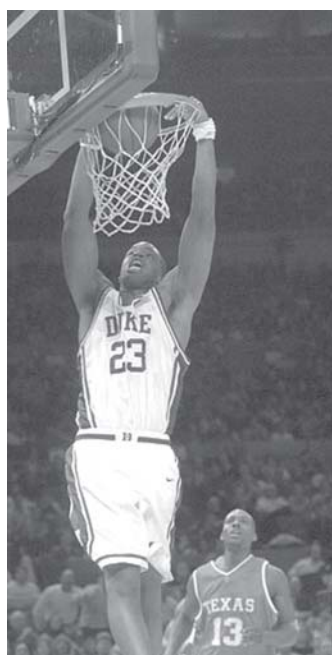
For the second straight week No. 2 Kentucky had more first-place votes than Connecticut, but the Huskies received more points from the national media panel. Duke remained third.

Georgia Tech moved up one spot to fourth, its highest ranking since February 1986, and Vanderbilt moved into the poll at No. 25, its first appearance in the Top 25 since February 2000.

The Huskies (8-1) received 21 first-place votes and 1,636 points, 22 more than the Wildcats (6-0), who were No. 1 on 25 ballots. Kentucky beat Indiana 80-41 on Saturday.

Duke (8-1), which beat then-No. 11 Texas 89-61 on Saturday, had two first-place votes and 1,539 points.

Georgia Tech (10-0) had 16 first-place votes. Arizona, which moved from seventh to



Duke University's Sheldon Williams dunks as University of Texas' Sydmill Harris (13) looks on during the second half Saturday, Dec. 20, 2003, at New York's Madison Square Garden. Williams had 14 points and four blocks as Duke won the game, 89-61. AP

fifth, and Stanford, which jumped from ninth to sixth, each had two first-place votes.

Oklahoma moved up one spot to seventh and Wake Forest, which received the other No. 1 vote, went from No. 14 to No. 8 after its 119-114 triple-overtime win at North Carolina, which dropped five places to

ninth.

Saint Joseph's and Missouri switched places at 10th and 11th and Kansas, which lost 75-61 at Nevada on Sunday night, fell from sixth to No. 12.

Florida was 13th and was followed by Cincinnati, Gonzaga, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Texas, Wisconsin and Louisville.

The last five ranked teams were Illinois, Purdue, Dayton, Maryland and Vanderbilt.

The Commodores (8-0) are off to their best start since 1973-74 when they won their first 10 games. This season's biggest wins have been over Michigan and Indiana.

Marquette (7-2) fell out of the rankings for the first time since January 2002 following its 63-59 loss to Wisconsin on Saturday. The Golden Eagles were 23rd last week.

Wake Forest's jump of five spots was the biggest gain of the week, while Texas' drop from a tie for 11th to No. 18 following the loss to Duke at Madison Square Garden, was the biggest drop.

There are three meetings between ranked teams this week. On Tuesday, No. 23 Dayton is at No. 14 Cincinnati, and No. 21 Illinois plays No. 11 Missouri at St. Louis. On Saturday, No. 20 Louisville is at No. 2 Kentucky.

## NY Knicks fire Layden, hire Thomas

**NEW YORK** (AP)—In a change of leadership that almost no one at Madison Square Garden saw coming, Scott Layden was fired Monday as president of the New York Knicks and was replaced by Isiah Thomas.

The move comes after New York missed the playoffs the past two seasons with a roster largely assembled by Layden. The Knicks are 10-18 this season, and recent speculation centered on coach Don Chaney possibly losing his job.

Instead, the man forced out was Layden, who joined the Knicks in the summer of 1999 after they were coming off an appearance in the NBA Finals.

"I don't think there's any question that everybody is underperforming. Just look at our record," said James Dolan, the chairman of the team's corporate owner, Cablevision. "This is the thing we could do right now to most help the team. That's the bottom line of it."

Thomas has been out of the NBA since being fired over the summer by the Indiana Pacers, where he was the coach for three seasons. He received a phone call from Dolan and Garden president Steve Mills on Friday, then spent Saturday meeting with them.

He was introduced at a press conference in the same Garden restaurant where Layden made his first public appearance as the

Knicks' general manager 4 1/2 years ago.

"We've got players and coaches probably a little bit unsure of what's going on, and my job is to come here and calm the waters," Thomas said.

Calming the waters, however, could be a tough task after Thomas emphasized in several recent interviews that his desire is to return to coaching. That might not bode well for Chaney, who has been coaching the Knicks throughout their decline into insignificance.

Thomas said everyone in the organization will be evaluated, providing no assurances to anyone. Chaney did not speak to reporters after practice Monday morning.

Thomas' first look at his new team will come Tuesday night when former Knick Latrell Sprewell and the Minnesota Timberwolves visit New York.

The task confronting Thomas is a difficult one, whether he tries to tinker with or overhaul an underachieving roster with the league's highest payroll. The contracts of Allan Houston, Keith Van Horn, Howard Eisley and Shandon Anderson will take up almost all of the team's salary cap space for the next three seasons.

"Everyone who looks at the cap situation, the first thing they say is, 'You can't fix this, you

can't do it,'" Thomas said. "We have to be a team that's very unconventional and very creative in going out and getting players."

Layden's last major move was the four-team trade that sent Sprewell to Minnesota and brought Van Horn to New York. The deal has appeared to favor the Timberwolves during the first two months of the season. Sprewell has averaged 17.2 points for Minnesota while Van Horn has struggled, averaging 14.8 points and getting benched for the fourth quarter of several recent games.

Before the Van Horn trade, Layden's biggest move came on draft night in 2002 when he sent Marcus Camby, Mark Jackson and the Knicks' lottery pick—which turned into Brazilian center Nene—to Denver for Antonio McDyess.

McDyess fractured his knee-cap in an exhibition game and missed the entire 2002-03 season, finally returning 11 games ago.

With the Knicks losing regularly and failing to draw the sell-out crowds that were a staple during the 1990s, Layden became a lightning rod for criticism. The anti-Layden feeling was so strong in New York that when LeBron James was selected with the No. 1 pick in the draft at the Garden last June, commissioner David Stern's announcement of the selection was drowned out by a loud chant of "Fire Layden!"







**Jones, Pangelinan  
score win in Shell 4.0**  
A cameo appearance by the sun over the weekend resulted in the conclusion of three of the five doubles divisions of the 2002 Shell Tennis Open Championship.

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# Sports



**Baseball union may  
set strike date**  
With little evidence of progress toward a labor contract, baseball players could set a strike date as early as next week to pressure owners into making a deal.

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